

## EDITORIAL FOREWORD

This grammar and dictionary of Rabha is a reworked version of the author's doctoral dissertation, defended at Deccan College in Pune on the 1st of November 1999. The Rabha language and people are mentioned by the earliest Western sources on the region. Yet this hefty volume is the first thorough description of this important but now endangered language of northeastern India. Despite its great value, the manuscript languished for years on the desk of an editor in Europe who in the end proved unable to publish the work. Fortunately the book later found its way to Leiden.

Joseph's phonological and phonetic notation and original formulations and analyses have been conserved with as little editing as possible. The work does not incorporate revisions in the structure of the Tibeto-Burman language family tree from after 1997. At the author's suggestion, this Brill edition accommodates a number of comments sent from Oslo by Robbins Burling to the author in friendly letters dated 10 December 1998, 26 November 1998 and 4 January 1999. In places the prose becomes rotund, but many linguists fussy about the sophistication of exposition end up documenting no new language data at all, let alone anything on the scale of Joseph's present detailed contribution on a hitherto undescribed language. This work is a tribute to the Rabha people and to Joseph.

No non-Rabha alive has greater knowledge of Rabha language and culture than Joseph, a native of Kerala who has mastered several languages of the northeast, including Khasi. Malayali family names and patronymics precede the given name by which a person is known, i.e. Thatil Umbavu Varghese Joseph. Yet to his parishioners at Umswai in the Mikir Hills or Karbi Anglong and to his many friends throughout the northeast, Joseph is known affectionately as Father Joseph of the Don Bosco Congregation.

George van Driem  
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